



News Release

366-10
December 14, 2010

CONTACT:
David Blanchette
(217) 558-8970

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A holiday gift with a direct Lincoln connection

“Little drummer boy” trousers and drum donated to Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

SPRINGFIELD – Original items from a real “little drummer boy” who played for a man who was destined for greatness have been donated to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM) in Springfield, Illinois.

The original trousers and drum belonging to seven-year-old Stephenson “Steve” Cozad, who played for U.S. Senate candidate Abraham Lincoln during an October 11, 1858 campaign stop in Monmouth, Illinois, have been donated to the ALPLM by Steve’s granddaughters, Barbara Blood of Sandpoint, Idaho and Lucile Bingham of Lincoln, Nebraska. The ALPLM plans to put the items on display starting January 12, 2011.

“These ‘little drummer boy’ items have a wonderful story with a unique and direct Lincoln connection,” said ALPLM Lincoln Curator James Cornelius. “There is nothing else like them in our collection, and we are thrilled that Barbara and Lucille chose to donate them.”

Little Steve wanted to play the drum with his father’s Republican Fife and Drum Corps in Monmouth when Abraham Lincoln came to town during the 1858 Senate campaign against Stephen A. Douglas. So Stephenson’s mother Mary made some cotton cloth on her loom in their rural Warren County home, about five miles from Monmouth, and made the boy a pair of pants identical to those worn by the men in the drum corps. Steve also got his own drum after practicing on his father’s - the drum is about 17 inches in diameter and 13 inches tall, a bit big but manageable for the little drummer boy.

Lincoln appeared in Monmouth on October 11, 1858, or four days before the debate against Douglas in Galesburg on October 15 and a day after his stop in Burlington, Iowa.

Douglas had already been in Monmouth, and Lincoln trailed him, as he did so often that season, to mop up the misstatements Douglas had made about Republican policy and Lincoln's beliefs. The Fife and Drum Corps, including their new drummer boy, met the visitor at the western edge of town on the Oquawka Road despite very muddy conditions, and marched him to the speaker's platform. The Monmouth Republican Glee Club performed, along with the Fife and Drum Corps, before Mr. Lincoln got up to speak. But first he asked seven-year-old Steve to come up to the platform, and the two shook hands. Lincoln then asked the boy to stand on the tall man's chair and play the drum. He did so, the crowd cheered, and then Lincoln spoke, reportedly for three hours. Two days later Lincoln and Douglas met head to head again, in Quincy.

The only newspaper in Monmouth in 1858 was Democratic. It did not report nice things about Lincoln or his speech, but it did mention that the band had played. The *Chicago Tribune* gave a lengthier and positive report on the speech, also mentioning the musical performance.

Stephenson Cozad told much of this story over and over to his little granddaughters and taught them each how to play his drum. Barbara, the older one, got to put on the very pants her grandpa had worn – now a little longer because Stephenson's mother Mary had to lengthen them for the 1860 presidential campaign fife and drum events, though Lincoln did not return to Monmouth that year. The pants were originally held up by suspenders, but those had long since disintegrated. In 1927 Stephenson's wife Hope sewed on a new, plastic button at the waist so seven-year-old Barbara could wear the pants.

The Cozads later moved to Nebraska, and both granddaughters grew up in the city of Lincoln, where Barbara's father helped build the capitol building and a major structure at the University of Nebraska.

Barbara Blood, 90 years old, hung on to the white home-made trousers for most of her life. Lucile Bingham, 85 years old, kept the drum and drumsticks for most of her life. Finally, the two cousins got together and decided to donate their treasures to the ALPLM in Springfield in late 2010. They are both the granddaughters of Stephenson Edmund Cozad (1850-1933).

"My grandpa and I were really good pals. I lived only a block from grandma and grandpa, so I was in their house all the time," said Barbara Blood.

The pants today look almost as good as new, with just a couple of small stains. The drum is a little banged up, but can still be played gently, with the original sticks that have early-20th-century black tape on the handles for a better grip. Most of the wood, animal skin, rope, and leather pieces of the drum are original; a metal hook for attaching to the player's sash is 20th century, as is the metal clamp for the snares that straddle the bottom of the instrument.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is the nation's most-visited presidential complex and includes a 50,000-item Abraham Lincoln collection, select pieces of which are displayed on a rotating basis. For more information, visit www.presidentlincoln.org.

#